



**File Code:** 1950/1560

**Date:** October 22, 2021

Dear Interested Party:

This project announcement letter serves to initiate scoping, “an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed” (40 CFR 1501.7). I request your input on the proposed actions regarding the following project:

- Dutch Creek Ecological Management Unit in Compartments 298, 299, 300, 301, and 302.

The Poteau-Cold Springs Ranger District proposes to implement management activities such as timber harvest, fuels treatments, silviculture treatments, wildlife treatments, and transportation treatments. Detailed descriptions of the Proposed Actions and maps for each project are located on the following website: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/ouachita/landmanagement/projects>.

Dutch Creek project area is in Township 3 North, Range 27 West Sections 13-15, 22-24, and 25-27, T3N R26W Sections 1-4, Sections 7-13 and Sections 15-20; and T4N R26W Sections 35 and 36 in Scott County, Arkansas immediately west of the Yell County line. Dutch Creek is located approximately 10 miles east of Waldron, Arkansas and approximately 15 miles south of Magazine, Arkansas. Blue Ball community is located to the northeast of this project area.

### **Purpose of the Action**

The purpose of these actions is to restore the health and vigor of the areas by providing for a diversity of plant and animal communities, early seral habitat in a well-distributed grass/forb or shrub/seedling stage, reduction in fuel accumulation, and production of a sustainable yield of wood products.

### **Need for the Action**

Field examinations and inventories determined that the existing conditions do not meet the desired conditions of Management Area 14 (Ouachita Mountains, Habitat Diversity Emphasis) and Management Area 2 (Special Areas/Dutch Creek) for the Dutch Creek project. The Proposed Actions would move this project toward the desired conditions established by the Interdisciplinary Team and the design criteria in the Revised Forest Plan.

### **Invitation to Participate in Project Planning**

Scoping is not limited to a single point in time; we will continue to accept and consider comments until an implementation decision is made. With that said, your comments will be most helpful if they are received early in the process. They will help us identify environmental issues associated with implementation, and alternative ways to meet Forest plan objectives and desired conditions. Your involvement will enable us to better assess concerns of the public.

Comments received in response to this solicitation, including names and addresses of those who comment, will become a part of the public record for this proposed action. Comments submitted anonymously will be accepted and considered; however, anonymous comments will not provide the Agency with the ability to provide the respondent with subsequent environmental documents.



## Objection Process

This project is subject to subparts A and B of *36 CFR Part 218 Project-Level Predecisional Administrative Review Process* (objection process); it is not authorized under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA). The designated opportunity for public comment in response to this solicitation is **October 22-November 19, 2021**. Providing specific written comments during this time will afford you standing to later file an objection to the project, should you desire (see Upcoming Project Planning Steps). Pursuant to §218.2, specific written comments should be within the scope of the proposed action, have a direct relationship to the proposed action, and must include supporting reasons for the responsible official to consider.

## How to Comment

Specific written comments must be submitted to: District Ranger, P.O. Box 417, Booneville, AR 72927 or fax to 479-675-3232. Oral or hand-delivered comments may be made at 1541 Hwy 248 West, Waldron, AR during normal weekday business hours from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Send electronic comments to:

[SM.FS.r8oucsprdcom@usda.gov](mailto:SM.FS.r8oucsprdcom@usda.gov).

## Upcoming Project Planning Steps

As stated above, your comments will help us identify issues and they will be used to formulate alternatives to this proposal. An environmental analysis will be conducted, and the results will be documented in an environmental assessment (EA). Upon completion, draft EAs will be released for public review and comment. A 30-day notice and comment period pursuant to 36 CFR 218 will be initiated. This comment period will afford you another opportunity to obtain standing to later file an objection to this project, should you desire. An objection period, if required, will follow the regulation found in §218.7. Issues raised in objections must be based on previously submitted specific written comments regarding this project and attributed to the objector, unless the issue is based on new information that arose after a designated opportunity to comment (§218.8©).

If you have questions about this project or would like more information, please contact Donna Reagan [donna.reagan@usda.gov](mailto:donna.reagan@usda.gov) or leave a message for a return phone call at 479-675-4743 ext. 110.

Sincerely,

*/s/James Johnson*

District Ranger